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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000771

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TWO DEAD IN RASH OF CAPITAL BOMBINGS; MAOISTS
CALL FOR "INDEFINITE BANDH"

1. (SBU) Summary. A string of seven Maoist attacks across the Kathmandu valley April 17-18 killed two and wounded eight. Maoists attacked three street-side police posts, in one case killing one officer and one civilian bystander. Attacks on government offices and the home of an advisor to the Prime Minister were also reported. In an April 15 statement, Maoist leader Prachanda threatened an "indefinite" general strike following the one called for April 23-27. Experience shows that once made, Prachanda's statements are difficult to retract. The wave of violence is an attempt to intimidate Kathmandu's residents into observing the Maoists' strike. End Summary.

Bomb in Capital Kills Two

2. (SBU) A bomb thrown at a police stand on a busy thoroughfare in Kathmandu April 17 killed two, according to police sources. At around 8:00 p.m. local time, Maoist insurgents threw an improvised explosive device made from a pressure cooker at the small police stand. They then fired on officers with pistols. One policeman died at the scene; another remains in serious condition. Shrapnel from the blast wounded three passers-by, one fatally.

Five More Injured in Similar Morning Incident

3. (SBU) Between 5:30 and 6:30 a.m. local time, Maoists attacked a half-dozen locations around the Kathmandu valley. In an incident similar to the April 17 bombing, a petrol bomb was thrown at a small police stand on a busy street in Gattekulo, near the Kathmandu's Maitidevi neighborhood. Two police and three passers-by were injured, police related to Post. [Note: A Reuters wire story erroneously reported six wounded, including four members of the public. End Note.]

But No Other Injuries or Fatalities

4. (SBU) No other injuries or fatalities were reported in the hour's five other incidents. The incidents occurred in disparate locations in and around Kathmandu, and all involved Molotov-cocktail-style attacks. Targets included another police stand; a Health Department vehicle; an Education Office; a Village District Committee building; and the home of the economics advisor to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The advisor, Dr. Prakash Saran Mahat, was in New Delhi at the time. Fire caused significant damage to downstairs rooms, but no one was harmed, Mahat told us.

Chinese Worker Ambushed

5. (U) A Chinese contractor on a hydroelectric project was injured when Maoists ambushed his vehicle April 17 in Sindhupalchowk district north of the capital.

Maoist Leader Threatens "Indefinite Bandh"

6. (SBU) In an April 15 press release, Maoist leader Prachanda stated that "there is a need of not only the five-day bandh (general strike) but also of an indefinite Nepal bandh until there is no way out." The statement continues, "the dream of the feudal tyrants, who like to keep the great Nepali people as the slaves of the Middle Ages by frightening them with the names of America, the UK and India, will never be fulfilled." [Note: Post's translation of the April 15 statement has been forwarded to SA/INS.]

Flight Diverted Due to Maoist Attack

7. (U) A Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) flight to Humla district in western Nepal was diverted to Nepalgunj after Maoists fired and threw bombs at the Simikot

airport. A newspaper correspondent for Kantipur, Nepal's leading vernacular daily, reported the story from Simikot, Humla's district capital. No one was injured, and the plane was undamaged, according to a press report. Reached after hours, civil aviation authorities and the RNAC office at Kathmandu's international airport could not confirm the story.

Post Response

18. (SBU) Conoff is preparing a public announcement for CA clearance. Post will hold a warden meeting for American citizens April 19. An EAC meeting will be held April 19, and another on April 22.

Comment: Saying and Making It So

19. (SBU) The Maoists have raised the stakes considerably by threatening an "indefinite" bandh. As the aborted April 2-6 bandh showed, Prachanda has difficulty retracting his statements once they are in circulation. As in the past, in response to Prachanda's calls for a general strike April 23-27, Maoist cadres have ratcheted up the violence in order to intimidate urban residents into staying home. Also as in the past, government facilities and officials were the targets of this most recent wave of attacks - although their increasingly indiscriminate execution have again killed and wounded innocent by-standers.

MALINOWSKI